THE UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT *of* JUSTICE

FY 2022
Annual
Evaluation Plan

March 2022

About

Department of Justice

The Department of Justice (DOJ) serves to enforce the law and defend the interests of the United States according to the law; to ensure public safety against threats foreign and domestic; to provide federal leadership in preventing and controlling crime; to seek just punishment for those guilty of unlawful behavior; and to ensure fair and impartial administration of justice for all Americans.

The Department of Justice, often referred to as the largest law office in the world, began in 1789 with a staff of two: the Attorney General and a clerk. The Judiciary Act of 1789 created the Office of the Attorney General, providing for the appointment of "a person, learned in the law, to act as attorney-general for the United States." By 1870, the duties of the Office of the Attorney General had expanded so much that Congress adopted "an Act to establish the Department of Justice." As its head, the Attorney General is the chief litigator and the chief law enforcement officer of the United States.

Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018

On January 14, 2019, the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 (Evidence Act) was signed into law. The law emphasizes the importance of evaluation and requires agencies to undertake a number of activities to build and use evidence. These activities include developing and publicly sharing a learning agenda, a capacity assessment, and an annual evaluation plan. Consistent with the Evidence Act, the Department of Justice is committed to conducting rigorous and relevant evaluations, to using evidence from these evaluations to inform policy and practice, and to conducting its evaluations in a transparent and ethical manner. This report provides an overview of each of the ten significant evaluations DOJ plans to conduct in FY 2022.

Significant Evaluations

Consistent with the Evidence Act, this annual evaluation plan describes the *significant* evaluations that the Department will conduct in FY 2022. The following criteria were used to identify significant evaluations.

Relevance to agency mission, goals, and objectives

- **Relevant** evaluations will focus on priority programs and policies that are important to the agency's mission, goals, and objectives

Potential impact on agency decision making

- **Impactful** evaluations will produce actionable results with potential to inform high-stakes decisions about programs and policies

Methodological rigor

- A **rigorous** evaluation employs methods most appropriate for the objectives, within constraints of timeline, feasibility, and available resources

Statutory requirements

- **Legislative mandates** may require evaluation of specific programs and policies

Overview of Evaluations

This report is organized around the top two priorities that the Attorney General laid out in his overview of the Department's budget request for FY 2022: keeping our country and communities safe, and protecting civil rights and civil liberties.[1] In future years, the Department's annual evaluation plan will be aligned with the goals defined in its Strategic Plan.

Evaluations supporting each of these high-level priorities are shown below.

Keeping Our Country and Communities Safe

- Project Safe Neighborhoods
- Comprehensive School Threat Assessment Guidelines
- Nevada SafeVoice Anonymous Reporting System
- Say Something Anonymous Reporting System

Protecting Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

- Strengthening Police and Community Partnerships
- Body-Worn Cameras
- Second Chance Act Grants
- Annual Review and Revalidation of the Prisoner Assessment Tool Targeting Estimated Risk and Needs (PATTERN)
- Anger Management Program
- Bureau Rehabilitation and Values Enhancement Program (BRAVE)

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[1] Statement of Merrick B. Garland, Attorney General, before the United States Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies for a Hearing on the Fiscal Year 2022 Department of Justice Budget Request, June 9, 2021 (link).

Keeping Our Country and Communities Safe

Project Safe Neighborhoods

Participating component: Office of Justice Programs (OJP)

Background

Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) is a Department of Justice initiative aiming to reduce the most pressing violent crime problems through comprehensive, collaborative, and community-based approaches. Working together with agencies and organizations of multiple disciplines, U.S. Attorneys' Offices (USAOs) develop and implement violent crime-reduction strategies within the USAO districts. Districts receive formula grant funds to implement some of the PSN strategies. Each district's PSN program is developed around specific design elements and core principles that include a partnership with federal, state, local, territory, and tribal law enforcement and prosecutors, as well as other agencies and organizations serving the community; data-driven strategies to target enforcement efforts in locations with significant violent crime problems; prevention of additional violence; accountability through collection of relevant data and measurement of results and outcomes; fostering trust and legitimacy in communities; and setting focused and strategic enforcement priorities. Though PSN is a long-standing program, it has not been evaluated in more than a decade, during which time the program has also evolved. The current evaluation is funded via a competitive grant from the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) in the Office of Justice Programs (OJP). The Executive Office for United States Attorneys facilitates communication between NIJ and the USAOs and provides input to inform NIJ's evaluation. Other DOJ and OJP components provide the necessary data for the evaluation.

Research Questions

- How do violent crime rates change in USAO districts during PSN implementation?
- How is PSN implemented in each USAO district, particularly regarding the selection of target enforcement areas and the application of core elements and principles?
- To what extent are changes in violent crime rates associated with various factors, including but not limited to PSN strategies and activities, the types of violent crime targeted, and the number and scope of prioritized target enforcement areas?
- In selected case study sites, to what extent do changes in violent crime rates differ in PSN target enforcement areas compared with other areas?

Design and Methods

The evaluation includes both a national assessment and a set of case studies in 10 systematically selected districts. Qualitative and quantitative methods are applied in both tiers. The national assessment uses qualitative information drawn from reports and strategic plans that PSN coordinators submitted to DOJ and responses from semi-structured interviews and surveys administered by the

evaluation team. The quantitative component of the national assessment involves multilevel longitudinal growth models to examine crime trends in USAO districts, variations in how PSN is implemented, and whether outcomes are associated with implementation. The analyses use data from the Uniform Crime Reporting system for crime outcomes and incorporate control variables (covariates) from the American Community Survey and other sources to isolate the effects of PSN characteristics from contextual factors.

Case studies in the 10 selected districts use qualitative information from interviews with PSN coordinators and key stakeholders and quantitative data on crime incidents provided by local law enforcement partner agencies. Trends in violent crime in each of the target enforcement areas will be compared to similar areas that have not been the focus of PSN efforts. Additionally, case studies may include community resident surveys to assess perceptions of safety, community engagement, and police legitimacy.

This four-year evaluation started in January 2020 and is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2023.

Dissemination and Use

Results will be disseminated through NIJ publications, academic journal articles, publications aimed at practitioners and policymakers, and conference presentations. The evaluation will document the implementation of PSN strategies and identify which strategies appear to be associated with the most significant changes in violent crime rates.

Comprehensive School Threat Assessment Guidelines

Background

The Comprehensive School Threat Assessment Guidelines (CSTAG) is a K-12 school threat assessment model, developed at the University of Virginia, that applies a problem-solving approach to violence prevention. It identifies troubled students who have threatened violence and recommends an appropriate response. This may include a recommendation for assistance to reduce the risk of violence by bringing resources to their educational and mental health needs, a law enforcement investigation, and/or another response. A team of individuals associated with the school carry out the threat assessment, which includes a five-step decision tree. This evaluation, funded by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) in the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) via a grant to the University of Virginia, will test implementation of the CSTAG in Florida and will expand on previous studies of the model by examining additional types of outcomes. It will also assess whether threat assessment is conducted without disproportionate negative consequences for students across diverse groups defined by race, ethnicity, and disability status.

Research Questions

- How do stakeholders react to the implementation of threat assessment in their school?
- What are the characteristics of threat assessments conducted? This includes: What was the team's assessment of the seriousness of the threat, and who was threatened? What was the student's behavior following the threat? Was the threat carried out? If so, did injuries occur? Did the student apologize for the threat, participate in some form of conflict resolution, and/or receive counseling or mental health services?
- What associations exist with academic, school discipline, and legal outcomes (arrest, incarceration, court charges) for students receiving a threat assessment?
- Are there adverse disparities in student outcomes associated with race, ethnicity, or special education status?
- Did school teams, parents, and students receive training on threat assessment and reporting threats? What is the quality of that training? Do pre-workshop and post-workshop surveys indicate individuals learned what was expected regarding threat assessment? Do these responses vary by the length of time that a school has been using threat assessment?

Design and Methods

This two-year study, scheduled to end in December 2022, has multiple components, including a process evaluation and an outcome evaluation. The outcome evaluation has a longitudinal design that

involves tracking changes in students over time, both before and after threat assessments. The study will make use of surveys, interviews, educational administrative data, and threat assessment records.

Dissemination and Use

It is anticipated that findings will be disseminated through conference presentations, webinars, website postings, written reports, and journal articles. The results from the study will help identify whether modifications should be made to improve the threat assessment model and whether adjustments should be made to the training to aid in model use by schools. Further, it may lead to the adoption of the model in other locations.

Nevada SafeVoice Anonymous Reporting System

Participating component: Office of Justice Programs (OJP)

Background

SafeVoice is an anonymous reporting system, established by the Nevada Department of Education, for K-12 students to report threats to student safety or well-being. Students and others can submit tips via a toll-free tip line, an online web form, or a mobile app. A team of trained experts responds to tips at all times. Tips that indicate the need for immediate intervention are sent directly to law enforcement for emergency response, and tips that are not emergencies are sent to school teams for appropriate response. This study, funded by NIJ via a grant to the Pacific Institute of Research and Evaluation, is designed to assess the effectiveness of the SafeVoice program.

Research Questions

- Does SafeVoice provide the necessary immediate support to students in need and effectively intervene to prevent potentially harmful events (e.g., bullying, violence, and substance abuse)?
- Does SafeVoice lead to an eventual reduction in problem indicators at the school level (e.g., incidents of bullying and violence, possession of weapons and illegal substances, and disciplinary reports)?
- Does SafeVoice lead to increases in (a) self-reported behavioral wellness (e.g., less substance use, depression, and suicidal ideation) and (b) perceptions that school is a safe and caring place for students?
- How is SafeVoice implemented across the state of Nevada? How do implementation and contextual factors (development and marketing, training, management) influence program outcomes?
- What are the outputs of SafeVoice (number of calls, number of investigations, time to initiate investigations, number of responses, time to initiate a response, and disposition of responses)?
- How do the SafeVoice multi-disciplinary response teams (MRTs) function? What are their perceptions of school and team readiness, the support they receive from their school and district, and other factors that contribute to a successful response and intervention? Relatedly, how do school principals, school personnel, parents, and students perceive multi-disciplinary response teams?
- What are the costs of SafeVoice? (e.g., program development, maintenance, and oversight; training of MRTs; and continued technical assistance to teams)? What savings does SafeVoice incur through reductions in risky behaviors (e.g., bullying, violent incidents, and substance use) and increases in academic focus (e.g., increases in school attendance)?

Design and Methods

This six-year study, scheduled to end in December 2022, involves both a process evaluation and an impact evaluation. The impact evaluation involves a randomized controlled trial (RCT) in which school districts are randomly assigned to implement the SafeVoice program in either year 1 or year 2. Data sources include program intervention logs; school administrative data related to problem indicators; surveys, including the Nevada Youth Risk Behavior Survey; administrative tip line data; and interviews and focus groups.

Dissemination and Use

If the SafeVoice program is found to be effective at increasing school safety, there is the potential for adoption of this model by other states and jurisdictions. It is anticipated that findings will be disseminated through research briefs, conference presentations, and journal articles, as well as a training manual for states and municipalities to help them develop and administer similar tip-line programs.

Say Something Anonymous Reporting System

Participating component: Office of Justice Programs (OJP)

Background

The Say Something Anonymous Reporting System (SS-ARS) is a program of the Sandy Hook Promise Foundation implemented in multiple jurisdictions. SS-ARS trains youth, parents, schools, and community members to recognize warning signs in writing, speaking, or web content that could lead to harmful behaviors toward the self or others and to safely report potential threats. SS-ARS combines a school-wide violence prevention program that enhances risk recognition, empowers and engages school communities, and facilitates coordination between schools and law enforcement with an anonymous reporting system that permits reporting via a website, hotline, or a mobile app. This study, funded by NIJ via a grant to the University of Michigan, focuses on the program as implemented in Miami-Dade County, Florida, and is designed to assess the effectiveness of the program.

Research Questions

- Is SS-ARS effective in reducing violence in school communities?
- Does the SS-ARS program improve students', teachers' and administrators' recognition of mental duress, violent antecedents, and other risk behaviors in a student population?
- Does exposure to the SS-ARS program increase the reporting of risk behaviors?
- Does exposure to the SS-ARS program improve school response to risk behaviors?
- What factors facilitate or impede SS-ARS implementation (i.e., fidelity, reach, adoption)?
- What is the relationship between the fidelity of implementation and program outcomes?
- What are the total costs of SS-ARS implementation and the cost per violent event or consequence averted?

Design and Methods

This four-year study, expected to be completed in 2022, involves a process evaluation, an impact evaluation, and an analysis of cost-effectiveness. The impact evaluation involves a randomized controlled trial (RCT) in which schools are randomly assigned to receive the SS-ARS programing. Data sources include surveys, interviews, school administrative data, program implementation and activities, and measures of violence and other outcomes from SS-ARS.

Dissemination and Use

This study has the potential to inform the adoption or design of school safety tip lines; such programs have become increasingly popular, but their effectiveness has not been well studied. It is anticipated that findings will be disseminated through journal articles, scientific conference presentations, and technical reports.

Protecting Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

Strengthening Police and Community Partnerships

Participating component: Community Relations Service (CRS)

Background

The Strengthening Police and Community Partnerships (SPCP) program is a one-day facilitated dialogue program, delivered by the Community Relations Service (CRS), that convenes diverse community leaders, civil rights leaders, religious leaders, law enforcement, city and county officials, youth, and others in dialogue and problem solving.

The goals of the SPCP program are to:

- Improve trust and develop partnerships between law enforcement officers and the diverse communities they serve

- Engage local law enforcement and community leaders in dialogue to identify issues and solve problems collaboratively

- Help local leaders address longstanding community distrust and other historical barriers that hinder police-community partnerships

- Increase local capacity, develop partnerships, and develop local solutions to local problems

Each delivery of the SPCP program includes two sessions: one to identify issues, and another to develop solutions. Following the sessions, an SPCP Council is created. The Council is a standing, local working group comprised of diverse community leaders and law enforcement, city leaders, and others, whose goal is to improve police and community relationships. The roles of the SPCP Council are to act as an advisor to police and city leadership, to increase communication between the police department and community leaders, and to develop action plans to implement the solutions developed during the program. In fiscal year 2022, CRS plans to conduct up to three case studies of the SPCP program.

Research Questions

- What are participants' perceptions of the impact of the SPCP program on:

    o the relationships between diverse communities and police?
    o the levels of trust between diverse communities and police?
    o the levels of tensions between diverse communities and police?
    o the levels of community capacity to address future conflicts?

- How can CRS support the SPCP Council as a mechanism to improve police-community relationships?

Design and Methods

Retrospective surveys and interviews with program participants — including law enforcement officers, public officials, community leaders, and other stakeholders — will be used to evaluate the processes and effectiveness of the SPCP program. Questions will cover perceptions of racial tensions, community trust in the police, actions of the SPCP Council, and other related topics. It is anticipated that the impact case study method will be elaborated in FY 2022 to include prospective surveys, which will provide baseline data for later comparison with post-program results.

Dissemination and Use

After securing the consent of case study participants, CRS anticipates that the results could be disseminated through written reports, including the agency's annual report to Congress; conference presentations; webinars; website postings; and journal articles. Results will be used to inform future implementations of the program, by identifying promising practices to share with communities across the country and potential improvements to the design of the program itself.

Body-Worn Cameras

Participating components: Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives (ATF); Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA); Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI); United States Marshals Service (USMS)

Background

In 2021, the Department launched a body-worn camera (BWC) program to promote transparency and accountability in law enforcement operations. Under this program, the Department's law enforcement personnel will wear and activate BWCs during pre-planned operations. During FY 2022, BWCs will be deployed on limited scale by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives (ATF); the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA); the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI); and the United States Marshals Service (USMS). Each of these components will develop and adopt a policy on the use of BWCs, as well as evaluation metrics to measure the outcomes of its policy. The initial deployment in FY 2022 provides an opportunity to begin systematically collecting data on the use and functioning of BWCs.

Research Questions

- What challenges, if any, do agents face in activating and deactivating BWCs as required by policy during operations?

- What challenges, if any, do agents face in incorporating BWCs into their work (for example, checking cameras in and out, wearing them properly, and storing and keeping track of them)?

- How frequently are BWCs successfully activated as required by policy during operations?

- Will it be feasible, and what challenges will need to be addressed, to evaluate the impact of BWCs on uses of force and on public trust and confidence in the Department's law enforcement agents?

Design and Methods

This formative evaluation will involve surveys and other systematic information collections to gather information from law enforcement agents on their use of and interaction with BWCs. This will include brief surveys of agents (or other forms of information collection) following field operations where BWCs were activated. Data on camera activations and video storage will be used to assess the frequency with which BWCs are activated and operated as required by policy. Data on numbers of operations, uses of force, and interactions with the public (where relevant) will be used to assess the feasibility of, and challenges associated with, evaluating the impact of BWCs on uses of force and public trust and confidence.

Dissemination and Use

Results of this formative evaluation will be used to inform the phased implementation of the Department's BWC programs. Results will also be used to determine whether an impact evaluation focused on uses of force and/or public trust and confidence is feasible — and, if so, to design and conduct such an evaluation as the Department deploys BWCs on a larger scale.

Second Chance Act Grants

Participating component: Office of Justice Programs (OJP)

Background

The Second Chance Act (SCA), passed by Congress in 2008 and reauthorized in the First Step Act of 2018 (FSA), invests in strategies to reduce recidivism, increase public safety, and reduce corrections costs for state and local governments. In collaboration with the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), NIJ will evaluate the effectiveness of grants used by the Department of Justice to support offender reentry and recidivism reduction programs. BJA will support the evaluation by providing funds to selected SCA grantees to support tasks related to the evaluation. This evaluation is required by Title V of the FSA and was funded by NIJ via a grant to Georgia State University.

The SCA includes a requirement that NIJ evaluate:

- Effectiveness of SCA programs in relation to their cost, including the extent to which the programs improve reentry outcomes of participants (employment, education, housing, reductions in recidivism) in comparison to comparably situated individuals who did not participate in such programs and activities.
- The effectiveness of program structures and mechanisms for delivery of services.
- The impact of such programs on the communities and participants involved.
- The impact of such programs on related programs and activities.
- The extent to which such programs meet the needs of various demographic groups.
- The quality and effectiveness of technical assistance provided by the DOJ to grantees for implementing such programs.
- Such other factors as may be appropriate.

Research Questions

- To what extent did each selected SCA site implement its program to meet the intended goals, meet the needs of its participants, and achieve SCA and local evaluation outcomes?
- To what extent did organizational and external environmental structures and policies influence program implementation?
- To what extent did the SCA site implement the program with fidelity?
- What is the impact of the site program on SCA outcomes, costs, other programs, and the community?
- To what extent did BJA-funded training and technical assistance support program implementation, fidelity, and participation in a multi-site (quasi-)experimental evaluation?

Design and Methods

The evaluation focuses on three SCA grantee sites. This three-phase, multi-site study involves (1) evaluability assessments, which will inform site-specific designs for measuring the implementation, outcomes, costs, and impacts of the programs; (2) development of impact evaluation plans, where feasible, for each site; and (3) an assessment of the implementation, processes, outcomes, costs, and impacts of the SCA grants. At present, the evaluation team is finalizing the impact evaluation plans, as well as plans for assessments of the implementation, processes, outcomes, costs, and impacts of the SCA grants.

Dissemination and Use

It is anticipated that results will be disseminated through conference presentations; briefings and journal articles for practitioners, policymakers, and other stakeholders; and academic journal articles. Results will build the evidence base around effective reentry strategies funded through the SCA, provide greater understanding of the factors that influence evaluation readiness among reentry programs, describe the impact that SCA reentry programs have on recidivism when the services begin during detention and continue upon reentry to the community, and inform the funding and evaluation of reentry programs.

Annual Review and Revalidation of the Prisoner Assessment Tool Targeting Estimated Risk and Needs (PATTERN)

Participating component: Office of Justice Programs (OJP), Bureau of Prisons (BOP)

Background

The Prisoner Assessment Tool Targeting Estimated Risk and Needs (PATTERN) is a risk assessment tool used to assess and periodically reassess the risk of recidivism of each person in the custody of the federal prison system. PATTERN was developed for the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) in accordance with the First Step Act of 2018 (FSA). The tool has both "static" risk factors, including several criminal history items, and "dynamic" factors, including institutional programming, work, and behavior items. Under the FSA, results from the analysis of PATTERN will be used to "provide guidance on the type, amount, and intensity of evidence-based recidivism reduction programming and productive activities that shall be assigned for each prisoner."

Under the FSA, the annual review and revalidation of PATTERN includes: "(A) Any subsequent changes to the risk and needs assessment system made after the date of enactment of [the FSA]; (B) Recommendations developed under paragraph (2) [of 18 U.S.C. 3631], using the research conducted under paragraph (3); (C) Evaluation to ensure that the risk and needs assessment system bases the assessment of each prisoner's risk of recidivism on indicators of progress and of regression that are dynamic and that can reasonably be expected to change while in prison; (D) Statistical validation of any tools that the risk and needs assessment system uses; and (E) Evaluation of the rates of recidivism among similarly classified prisoners to identify any unwarranted disparities, including disparities among similarly classified prisoners of different demographic groups, in such rates." By assessing PATTERN's validity as a predictor of recidivism, this study evaluates the effectiveness of one component of BOP's recidivism reduction programming – in particular, the tool used to target this programming. This study also evaluates the equity with which BOP's recidivism reduction programs are targeted, by assessing whether the tool produces unwarranted disparities across racial or ethnic groups.

In collaboration with the BOP, the annual assessment of PATTERN is supported by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) in the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) through a contract. BOP supports the annual assessment through the provision of administrative data and technical and operational expertise.

Research Questions

- What changes have been made to PATTERN since the enactment of the FSA?
- Is PATTERN a valid predictor of general and violent recidivism?
- Are changes in PATTERN scores over time related to differences in risk for recidivism?

- Are there any unwarranted disparities identified based on the rates of recidivism among similarly classified prisoners of different racial or ethnic groups?
- What recommendations can be made to enhance the performance and utility of PATTERN?
- Does the risk and needs assessment system base prisoner risk of recidivism on indicators of progress and regression that are dynamic and can reasonably be expected to change while in prison?
- Are the four PATTERN risk and need assessment tools statistically valid?

Design and Methods

The 2022 evaluation will analyze an additional cohort of individuals released from BOP custody to assess the predictive validity, dynamic validity, and racial and ethnic neutrality of PATTERN. It will make use of BOP administrative data and individual criminal history records.

Dissemination and Use

Results will be released on the DOJ and NIJ websites and will also be included in a 2022 annual report to Congress, as required by the FSA.

Anger Management Program

Participating component: Bureau of Prisons (BOP)

Background

Anger Management is a low-dosage cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) intervention delivered by professional treatment staff to inmates in prisons managed by the Bureau of Prisons (BOP). It addresses critical criminogenic needs and is completed by a large portion of the inmate population. While research exists on CBT and anger interventions generally, none are specific to the programming provided by BOP. In line with the First Step Act of 2018, BOP will conduct an evaluation to assess whether the Anger Management program results in a reduction in misconduct, a reduction in recidivism, and a reduction in subjective feelings of anger.

Research Questions

- Does BOP's Anger Management program result in a reduction in prison misconduct following completion of the program?

- Does it result in a reduction in subjective feelings of anger?

- Are there long-term recidivism impacts?

Design and Methods

The program's impact on misconduct, recidivism, and anger will be assessed using a quasi-experimental design. Program participants will be compared with a control group that is selected via propensity score matching on a number of variables. The study will make use of demographic data, as well as data on institutional conduct, program participation, and medical and mental health functioning collected by BOP. Criminal history data and data on recidivism from the National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (NLETS) may also be used. This evaluation will be conducted under a multi-year contract beginning in FY 2022.

Dissemination and Use

Results will be disseminated through peer-reviewed publications for stakeholders, community providers, and correctional facilities. BOP will use the results of this research to inform the implementation of the Anger Management program in Bureau facilities.

Bureau Rehabilitation and Values Enhancement Program (BRAVE)

Participating component: Bureau of Prisons (BOP)

Background

The Bureau Rehabilitation and Values Enhancement Program (BRAVE) is a residential program designed to support first-time, medium-security, male inmates in prisons managed by the Bureau of Prisons (BOP). Specifically, the program is provided for inmates who are at the beginning of their sentence who are typically 32 years of age or younger and have a sentence of at least 60 months. BRAVE participants are housed together and spend at least 350 hours in programming focused on reducing criminal thinking and behavior, healthy communication, and emotional self-regulation. Substance abuse and mental illness may also be addressed. The goal of BRAVE is to reduce misconduct in prison and support appropriate adjustment to incarceration. In line with the First Step Act of 2018, BOP will conduct an evaluation to assess whether BRAVE results in a reduction in misconduct, a reduction in recidivism, and fewer crisis contacts.

Research Questions

- Does the BRAVE program result in a reduction in misconduct?

- Does it result in a reduction in crisis contacts for inmates following program completion?

- Does BRAVE result in reduced recidivism?

Design and Methods

The program's impact on misconduct, recidivism, and crisis contacts will be assessed using a quasi-experimental design. Program participants will be compared with a control group that is selected via propensity score matching on a number of variables. The study will make use of BOP data on program participation, mental health status and diagnosis, and misconduct. Data on recidivism from the National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (NLETS) may also be used. This evaluation will be conducted under a multi-year contract beginning in FY 2022.

Dissemination and Use

Results will be disseminated through peer-reviewed publications for stakeholders, community providers, and correctional facilities. BOP will use the results of this research to inform the implementation of the BRAVE program in Bureau facilities.

Appendix

Image Details

- Cover Photo: Corner entrance to the Robert F. Kennedy Main Justice Department building with the inscription "Justice in the life and conduct of the state is possible only as first it resides in the hearts and souls of the citizens."

- About Photo: A gold statue of a blindfolded Lady Justice holding a scale, representing equality and justice under the law.